

Summary

The transcript covers Elisabeth's life story through a question and answer session with her son Craig. It starts with details on her birthdate, place of birth, family background, childhood memories from Western Springs and Crete, Illinois, experiences during the Great Depression and World War II, high school and college years, how she met her husband, and decision to move to Colorado. Key details include being born on June 11, 1931 in Galesburg, Illinois, having 2 older brothers, fond memories of her parents and extended family, receiving a nice doll buggy as a memorable gift when young, getting a refrigerator to replace an icebox, childhood trips to see family in Crete, attending Rockford College, meeting her future husband while in graduate school, getting married and living in Illinois for a few years, and then deciding to move to Colorado in the 1960s.

Chapters

Family Background and Early Childhood

Covers Elizabeth's birthdate, birthplace, siblings, parents' backgrounds and how they met, early childhood memories of the family's Western Springs house, interactions with her brothers, trips to see extended family in Crete, experience of the Great Depression, pets owned, and receiving a memorable gift of a nice doll buggy at age 4.

00:12:09 Later Childhood and Teenage Years

Focuses on Elisabeth's later childhood after the family moved to Crete when she was 12, including her grandfather's passing, getting a refrigerator to replace the icebox, high school years participating in parades and activities in the small town, college aspirations, learning to drive at 15, first car purchased for a job after college, clothing styles and popular phrases among teenagers then.

00:57:14 College, Meeting Future Husband, and Move to Colorado

Covers Elisabeth attending Rockford College influenced by female relatives who went there, working waitressing jobs on campus, perspective on it being a women's college, meeting future husband while at graduate school in Kansas through a married friend, blossoming of their relationship leading to marriage, living in Illinois initially, and then deciding to move to Colorado in the 1960s at her husband's request.

Craig Patterson 00:00

Okay. I'm Craig Patterson, and I'm here with my mom, Elizabeth Patterson, also known as Tommy. And I'm going to ask her a few questions about her life and things that have happened to her. The first question I have is, what year were you born?

Craig Patterson 00:17

On what date? What day of the week was it?

Tommy Patterson 00:22

I was born on June 11, 1931, and I don't know what the other week it was. I never asked.

Craig Patterson 00:32

Did your parents tell you anything about the day we were born?

Tommy Patterson 00:36

think not. Where were you born? Galesburg, Illinois. How many brothers and sisters do you have? I have two brothers. Okay, when were they born? The elder was born November 19th, 1927. And the next one, the middle one of the three of us was born October 26th, 1929.

Tommy Patterson 01:13

That's the year of the great crash.

Craig Patterson 01:17

Do you have any specific memories of each of them from when you were first growing up?

Tommy Patterson 01:21

Not from when I was a little kid, particularly. They were bigger, older, and they pretty much were bored by me.

Craig Patterson 01:38

What do you mean by that?

Tommy Patterson 01:39

I don't think they really wanted to play with me. I think they would prefer to play with each other and tease me.

Craig Patterson 01:51

How did they tease you?

Tommy Patterson 01:54

They made fun of the things that I said, not so much the things I did with my toys, but they did kind of make fun of the things that I said.

Craig Patterson 02:04

Do you remember any examples of that?

Tommy Patterson 02:05

I don't, I don't.

Craig Patterson 02:10

Do you know where your first name came from?

Tommy Patterson 02:13

My first name is Elizabeth spelled with an S, and that's after my mother's mother. That's my grandmother on my maternal side. And not only was I named after her, but my cousin, who was a couple years older than I, but she was also named Elizabeth.

Tommy Patterson 02:36

And we didn't get confused because all of the Elizabeth nicknames had been assigned to somebody. Our grandmother was Aunt Lizzie to a huge relationship, and to all of us grandchildren, she was grandmother.

Tommy Patterson 02:57

My cousin Elizabeth was Betty, and there was another Elizabeth somewhere who was Betts. And then I never had one of the Elizabeth nicknames. My nickname is from elsewhere.

Craig Patterson 03:15

Well, speaking of that, the three of you had nicknames. What were those and where did they come from?

Tommy Patterson 03:20

The eldest was Pussums, the next was Kokomo, and I was Tom -Tom, and those came out of the funny papers, I believe. It was the Barney Googol strip. I cannot remember the author, but we have spent a long time trying to find a copy of one of the strips with those characters in the Pussums.

Tommy Patterson 03:49

Now, I've managed to forget what Pussums was. Kokomo was a baby. Tom -Tom was a black maid. I wonder if Pussums might have been a donkey, possibly. But anyway, the three of them, we were told, were from a comic strip, and we were also told that my father wanted us to have nicknames that were cute names in and of themselves as opposed to shortening of our given Christian names, and nicknames that we didn't like, such as Tubby, or Four Eyes, or something that was uncomplementary, which children often get named.

Tommy Patterson 04:40

So we had our own nicknames that went with us wherever we went.

Craig Patterson 04:47

What's your first most vivid memory?

Tommy Patterson 04:50

I think it's a present I got when I believe I was four years old. It was a doll baby buggy, and it was really fancy, much nicer than the general run of presents that we got. It was a really nice baby buggy, and I remember that very much.

Craig Patterson 05:13

Do you remember what kind of doll it was?

Tommy Patterson 05:15

Oh, I could use whatever doll in it that I wanted. The doll didn't come with it. I could use it for any of the baby dolls that I had.

Craig Patterson 05:22

So you had a collection?

Tommy Patterson 05:23

Oh, several. Not as many as I have teddy bears now, but I had a bunch of dogs, yes.

Craig Patterson 05:31

What was the house like you grew up in? How many bedrooms and bathrooms did it have? What do you remember about it?

Tommy Patterson 05:37

The one that I remember is from Western Springs, Illinois and I believe we were in the neighborhood of maybe 1933 or 4 when we moved there and I remember that house. The downstairs had a living room, dining room, kitchen, bathroom, and another room which turned into being a bedroom for the boys.

Tommy Patterson 06:03

The upstairs was a master room for my parents and another room which I eventually got to be my room and then there was a, I don't know whether it was a full bath or a three quarter bath upstairs.

Craig Patterson 06:21

What was your bedroom like?

Tommy Patterson 06:23

It had windows that looked out on the roof of a porch that my father added on to the house. I had a closed closet and an entrance to the bathroom. We called it a vanity dresser for girls. It had drawers for accessories and a triple mirror.

Tommy Patterson 06:53

I was older. I wasn't four when I had that room. I slept there for a long time. I think maybe the boys slept there for a long time too, but then eventually that room became mine.

Craig Patterson 07:08

And this was in Western Springs? In Western Springs, yes. Why do you remember the Western Springs house and not the Crete house? I thought you grew up in the Crete house.

Tommy Patterson 07:14

And I was in the Crete House—you have to know why we got there to Crete. We lived in the Western Springs House until 1940, when the National Guard, to which our They were nationalized before the Second World War started.

Tommy Patterson 07:51

And then in the fall of 1941, I think, they were nationalized, and then we vacationed some in Chattanooga, Tennessee, where he was stationed for the summer of 1941 and 1942. And so in 1942, they were put into the regular service as opposed to the National Guard.

Tommy Patterson 08:36

The war hadn't started yet—wait a minute—1941. The war started in 1941. He was sent to Washington State. Oh, now I've got the years a little mixed up in there, but anyway, the war was declared in the winter of 1941.

Tommy Patterson 09:05

So it must—so it was in 1942 that they were sent to Washington State. They had been nationalized in 1941. In 1942, he was sent to Washington State, and he thought that there would be a good opportunity for us to see a little of the country.

Tommy Patterson 09:25

So he made arrangements for us to go to Fort Lewis and live there while he was stationed there. And that was a marvelous trip. It was on a train. We had sleepers on the train. It was a lot of fun. Fort Lewis in what state?

Tommy Patterson 09:42

Washington. But we were only there from about October to March. Is that about six months? And while we were gone, they rented the Western Springs house to somebody. Then in the springtime of 1942—sorry, it should be 1943 now, shouldn't it?

Tommy Patterson 10:16

In the spring of 1943, he was sent overseas. And so we couldn't go with him because there was a war on folks. And so we were going to come back to East, and we didn't have a place to go because the house in Western Springs had been rented.

Tommy Patterson 10:40

So in this—see the U.S.A., here in Chevrolet, Adventure, we came around from Washington State down through California, through Arizona. We had a little stop at the Grand Canyon when it was snowing.

Tommy Patterson 10:59

So my trip to the Grand Canyon, I didn't see a thing except snow because it was snowing when we were there. And then we got back to Illinois and stayed, in theory, to stay with my grandmother—this is my grandmother, Elizabeth, my mother's mother—until our Western Springs house should open up for us to live in, except it didn't.

Tommy Patterson 11:22

They didn't want to move, and I think there was some reason why we didn't want to force them out. Oh, meanwhile, the people who had been with my grandmother helping her and taking care of her, her husband, my grandfather, had died a couple years before.

Tommy Patterson 11:43

Her sister had been living with her. Her sister died. So there was my grandmother. My mother thought, okay, we're here. We'll stay and take care of grandma. And we ended up staying there so that my high school career was spent in Crete from 1943 to 1948 when I graduated from high school.

Tommy Patterson 12:09

And I don't know whether those years were more impressionable. or why I do kind of remember those as my growing up years as Crete. And you want to back up a little bit. A couple of things I remember from when I was in Western Springs is that my father would take us around to look at the Christmas tree lights.

Tommy Patterson 12:33

That's one thing that he did with us, but I don't remember doing very much with him because any summertime vacation that he had, he was in the National Guard. So he always went to summer camp for the National Guard.

Tommy Patterson 12:46

Once we went with him to Delavan, Michigan, I think it was Delavan. I remember that trip because they didn't have inside bathrooms. They had outhouses, and they were covered with, what do you call those spiders that are, not thousand legged bugs, but.

Tommy Patterson 13:09

Daddy Long Legs. The whole outhouse was covered with Daddy Long Legs spiders, and it scared me to go in there. And we did not vacation with my father and my mother as a family very often. That was one of the few times that we did.

Craig Patterson 13:31

Is that because you couldn't afford it or because he was always gone in the service?

Tommy Patterson 13:35

I think it was more because he was always gone to a military encampment. But there might have been some affording in there. I wouldn't take big trips.

Craig Patterson 13:50

Did your mother work as well?

Tommy Patterson 13:52

No, she kept house. Although, when we were in Fort Lewis, one of the things that she did—we've laughed about this system because my mother was not a very good driver. She was of an era when the first time she had to have a driver's license test was when she was sixty -five, because she learned to drive when they were inventing cars for him.

Tommy Patterson 14:20

When we were in Fort Lewis, she joined the motor pool and she became a driver for the Army, where they drove trucks from point A to point B to get them from one place to another. None of us could figure out how she managed to get that job.

Tommy Patterson 14:37

Thank you.

Craig Patterson 14:38

That was kinda good. Do you remember the Western Springs neighborhood more growing up, or Crete, since it was in high school?

Tommy Patterson 14:43

In high school, Crete, and I remember the Western Springs neighborhood though because I had two very good friends. One lived two doors from us and one lived a block and half from us. And so I remember those two places.

Tommy Patterson 14:57

And I wrote to those two girls after we moved. We moved in 1943. I communicated with them until last year when my next second two -door -away neighbor died, so I don't write to her anymore, and the other one I'm still writing to.

Craig Patterson 15:22

We're going to pause right here for one second. Okay, we're back and you said that you wanted to add something to what you were just speaking of.

Tommy Patterson 15:34

Well, you asked me about what I remember from growing up times, and I do remember some things pleasantly from Western Springs, but I also remember Crete even when we weren't living there because our mother, as the saying goes, was pretty much joined at the hip to her mother.

Tommy Patterson 16:01

So she spent a lot of time going over there, visiting. Crete was about 30 miles from Western Springs, no more than 40, but I think about 30 or 35. And she had the use of their Ford car and would drive over to visit them and take us along.

Tommy Patterson 16:27

So we spent a great many of our summer vacations over there with Grandma and Grandpa before he died and a lot of time going over there to visit. And so I think of that as kind of a part of my growing up is these relatives.

Tommy Patterson 16:52

And my mother had a sister who lived 10 miles from Crete. Their family was down in Crete a great deal. So their three girls, who were our first cousins, were part of our growing up. And I think of that whole entourage as being our family.

Tommy Patterson 17:14

My mother's sister and her husband and their three children. My father did have a sister, but she was not part of our growing up. And my father's parents, we went to visit them. They lived in Chicago.

Tommy Patterson 17:31

And we went to visit them from Western Springs from time to time, but not with the same frequency that we went to Crete to

visit my mother's mother. So all of those things are part of my growing up. But the thing about Crete is that it was a very small town.

Tommy Patterson 17:53

Western Springs was a suburb of Chicago, which has a different flavor from a farming community like Crete. Now, my grandfather was not a farmer, but Crete was a farming community, really. And the people were close.

Tommy Patterson 18:13

If they didn't live close, they behaved like close friends. Everybody knew everybody. The schools were kindergarten through 12th grade in one building. And so it was a totally different atmosphere from a suburb.

Tommy Patterson 18:35

And when we were in Crete, there was a parade for every occasion. Memorial Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Flag Day, Bastille Day, Labor Day, everything. And when the boys were in high school, they played in the band.

Tommy Patterson 18:56

Oh, I twirled a baton when I was in high school. And we all marched in the parades that were going on all the time. So it was a community thing. And ice cream socials, we went to the ice cream socials.

Tommy Patterson 19:09

We had a community recreation center for the high school kids so that we could all have a place to go and dance. And I think at that time, we used records, I think. And that's how we spent our weekend nights.

Tommy Patterson 19:35

We did have a movie in Chicago Heights, but not one in Crete. So we didn't really have a whole lot of things to do. And also, keeping the time frame in mind, none of us had cars. We walked everywhere we went.

Tommy Patterson 19:51

It was a small town. We could walk everywhere we went. In Western Springs, we walked to our friends. And we walked to the grocery store, because that was only a couple blocks. But if we were going to do something in the way of activity, we might get on the train and go to Chicago.

Tommy Patterson 20:14

We didn't do that, because we didn't have the money to do that. That was in the Depression era. And so we didn't do a lot of stuff like that. But one of the things that I remember about the Depression was that there was a bakery.

Tommy Patterson 20:31

in one of the towns near Western Springs. And Thursday was the maid's night out for the rich people. And so they ordered the dollar dinner from the bakery. And you got a dinner for four for a dollar.

Tommy Patterson 20:48

Can you believe that? This was a long time ago. And my mother sometimes would splurge a dollar to have the dollar dinner for the four of us, which was kind of fun. I'm wishing now that somebody had a dollar dinner for us.

Craig Patterson 21:03

Do you know where your parents met?

Tommy Patterson 21:05

how they met? I don't know where they met specifically but I think they met because my uncle worked for Standard Oil and I think that my father probably had a job with Standard Oil for a little while.

Tommy Patterson 21:20

My father got out of, he went to West Point and then we got out of West Point. I think you're committed to four years of service or something like that and then I think after that he must have he must have gotten a job where he met my uncle and then my uncle introduced him to my mother.

Tommy Patterson 21:44

I'm kind of vague on that but I think that's sort of how it went.

Craig Patterson 21:50

Who was more strict, your mother or your father?

Tommy Patterson 21:53

Well, I don't know because my father was not around very much. Even when he was a civilian and working as a real estate appraiser, he was always going to night school or to, what do the National Guard people do?

Tommy Patterson 22:15

They have nights when they have to go to drills or something like that. So he was not home a whole lot.

Craig Patterson 22:25

Excuse me. Did you get into any trouble as a teenager? As a teenager. Well, did you get into any trouble because I don't want to restrict it to just being a teenager since you seem to think maybe I am.

Tommy Patterson 22:43

Yeah, I remember once when I was about seven, when we lived in Western Springs, we had a new neighbor. My mother and I had had a discussion about what was rude and what was acceptable social questioning and behavior.

Tommy Patterson 22:59

And one of the things we covered was, you know, one never asks people how much money they made, what religion they were, all those other things that you're not supposed to ask people. And one of the things that she, and she mentioned this, that you, no, no, do not, you would never ask anybody to see their home.

Tommy Patterson 23:20

And we had this new neighbor, she was a little kid my age and I wanted to get to meet her. And so I asked her if I could go and see her house. Oh, my mother was furious. It's the only time I can remember that she swore at me.

Craig Patterson 23:33

Did you get to see the house?

Tommy Patterson 23:35

Yeah, I saw the house before my mother found out about it, and she was absolutely furious with me, and that's the only time that I remember she got really after me. My father spanked me once, but I don't remember why, and it didn't happen very often, and he did not injure me.

Craig Patterson 23:55

Do you think your parents had a good marriage?

Tommy Patterson 23:58

They had a very solid marriage. I don't, because my father was a, he saw to it that he took care of us financially. My mother took care of us emotionally, and I'm not sure, I'm not sure that they were emotionally suited to one another, but they did stay married and provided a very solid footing for us.

Craig Patterson 24:31

Did you have pets growing up?

Tommy Patterson 24:33

That's all my word. We had several dogs. I do not remember them, except one that was a darling. I think his name was King, that every boy names his dog King, right? And it was maybe some kind of spaniel or a charming dog.

Tommy Patterson 24:59

And he eventually was either stolen or went away or something, so we didn't have him. But one of the years that we went to Tennessee, to Chattanooga, to be with my father. And that was a wonderful summer, very, very interesting, the place where we stayed.

Tommy Patterson 25:18

We stayed at an Episcopalian girl's home in the summertime when none of the students were there, just the nuns. And they had a dog. We stayed in the priest's cabin, I think. And they had this humongous Saint Bernard.

Tommy Patterson 25:38

He was wonderful. He would come in the house and drink out of the toilet and all of that. And they also had three Scotties. And the nuns were darling. They said, they'd like to have us take the Scotties for a walk, but they weren't sure if we could keep up with them.

Tommy Patterson 25:53

Well, of course, that was one of the things where we had to just drag the Scotties to get them to walk anywhere at all. They were impossible. But that summer, we were in town in Chattanooga. No, Tullo, Siwani.

Tommy Patterson 26:11

Siwani is a town where we stayed. Chattanooga was where the base was, the army base. So we were at home in Siwani. And my brother saw this dog that had been hit by a car. And he went over to see if the dog was all right.

Tommy Patterson 26:32

And the dog was not all right, except it was not dead. It was just feet had been run over. And its toenails, I think, were clipped. And it was really scared. And he was so tenderhearted of it. And so my mother said, well, we better take it home and see if we can take care of it and see if it will be all right.

Tommy Patterson 26:52

So we took it home and it stayed with us for the next 14 or 15 years. And I have never seen such an impossible pet. She bit me. She slept with each one of us in our beds. And I'm looking at a squirrel on the banister.

Tommy Patterson 27:09

When she slept with me, she bit my toes until I was about 15. Then she gave it up. I don't know what made her stop. But she bit anybody who came to visit us, she bit them. My grandmother had a grave digger who worked at the cemetery for her.

Tommy Patterson 27:32

And she did, the dog did not like him at all. And when I got married, my husband said, I can't imagine why anybody would tolerate having a dog like that for that length of time. And I don't know why we did either.

Tommy Patterson 27:52

Coke liked the dog and we kept the dog. And then my mother decided, well, we breed her and have puppies. So we did that, had half a dozen puppies that we had to take care of. We enclosed them in a, we made a little fence around the bottom of the pool, not pool table, the ping pong table.

Tommy Patterson 28:16

We had a ping pong table on the porch in Western Springs. So we kept the dog and the puppies in there until we could get rid of all of them. But, and they were nice dogs. They were cute dogs, sort of.

Tommy Patterson 28:31

But not nearly as cute as the dogs that I've had since. They were smooth-haired fox terriers. And dispositions, terrible, terrible dispositions.

Craig Patterson 28:47

Did you get an allowance when you were a kid?

Tommy Patterson 28:49

Now, when I was little, at least not that I remember. When I was in high school, my mother and I decided that I should have an allowance and figure out what it was for and stick to it. So I did. I got a clothing allowance then, and I had to pay for all my own clothes out of my allowance, and I did.

Tommy Patterson 29:11

I didn't get very many clothes. I had some hand-me-downs from these cousins. And I remember when I was a senior in high school, I got a coat that was my very own. It was not a hand-me-down, and I think my mother helped me pay for it, and I loved it forever.

Tommy Patterson 29:34

It was just a really nice coat.

Craig Patterson 29:40

Did you have chores that you had to do as a child?

Tommy Patterson 29:43

Yeah, I always had to help wash the windows. We did not have a dishwasher, and I think we did help dry the dishes from time to time, but I don't know that it was a regular chore. My mother cleaned once a week, usually on Friday morning or Saturday morning, she would clean the house, dust, mop, and vacuum, and so that's how I thought it was done.

Tommy Patterson 30:16

That's what I still do, and I have a housekeeper now, and I tell her that's what I want her to do is dust, mop, and vacuum.

Craig Patterson 30:25

Is that what she does?

Tommy Patterson 30:26

Uh huh.

Craig Patterson 30:28

Did you have any heroes or role models when you were a child?

Tommy Patterson 30:32

Well, I think, I don't know, was Superman an age that we, that he would have been a hero of ours? Probably we read Superman thing. One thing we did, oh, this was in Western Springs. If we were very, very good, we would get to listen, stay up, late, stay up on a school night, on Monday night, and listen to the Lux Radio Theater.

Tommy Patterson 31:01

And I think that was from seven to eight at night. And that was late for us to go to bed for school the next day. I know the rules are different now, but we were supposed to go to bed because of school the next day.

Tommy Patterson 31:17

And then if we were sick, we stayed home and listened to all the horrible soap operas. Which meant then when you got well and went back to school, you had to rush home from school so that you could tune in and find out the latest episode of the soap opera you had been listening to when you were sick, and that was very important to do that.

Craig Patterson 31:42

What did you want to be when you grew up?

Tommy Patterson 31:43

I wanted to be a movie star, I used to read something in the newspaper about movie stars and I thought they looked so glamorous. I didn't ever say that I wanted to act or that I wanted to do anything in order to deserve being that, I just wanted to be a big star.

Craig Patterson 32:05

You had mentioned World War II earlier. How did World War II affect your family if your father had to go fight?

Tommy Patterson 32:18

My—I had a cousin who was in the Army early on, so when all of the stuff was going on in the Pacific and the Japanese took over—the Philippines, is that what they took over? Where MacArthur said, I'll be back in the Philippines, and they captured all of those people and he was one of the people captured and he was—he was lost in the Japan death march early on.

Tommy Patterson 32:53

We didn't find out until later, and I'm not sure that anybody was ever notified. I think we may have just figured, okay, that's where he was, he's not back, he's not coming back. So I lost that one cousin.

Tommy Patterson 33:06

My father was part of the time in the Pacific theater and part of the time in the European theater, but I—he didn't write as much. There's another thing, he didn't write as much because he said he didn't want his mail censored, and I thought in my head, well, he could write something that wouldn't be censored, he could write, you know, how are you, I like you, we went for a hike today or something, but he didn't do any of that, he just didn't write because he thought he was being censored

and he didn't want anybody doing that.

Tommy Patterson 33:48

So that was not too swell, we would have liked to hear from him more, but anyway, my mother was really busy with folding bandages, which the Red Cross did for the war effort. We all had some rationing, which did not—we didn't starve because of it, we just had to be a little more cautious about what we were doing.

Tommy Patterson 34:19

Shoes were rationed, how many shoes we could get. Meat was rationed, sugar, butter, and a couple other foodstuffs, but not terribly much more, and gasoline and rubber, so you couldn't get new tires for your car, but of course very few people had cars anyway.

Tommy Patterson 34:51

That was not a big thing in the 40s, it became a big thing after the war. And oh, how did it affect us? One of the fellows on the high school basketball team had a father who owned a gas station, and so he helped all of us pull our gasoline so that we could drive the kids to the basketball game to play.

Tommy Patterson 35:27

And later on we realized that it's barely possible that he was fudging a little bit, but we never knew. We never knew whether it was legit or not to do that.

Craig Patterson 35:41

Other than World War II, what big world events do you remember from when you were growing up?

Tommy Patterson 35:49

Other than that, when FDR died, I remember that. I can't specifically tell you what I was doing, but I do remember that it happened.

Craig Patterson 36:04

so you don't recall whether the whole family heard about it at once.

Tommy Patterson 36:12

Within a couple of hours, but we weren't all sitting around the radio waiting to hear. We probably all heard about it the same day. Let's see, that would be the first 50. I can't remember the exact dates of this, but we were conscious of the atomic testing.

Tommy Patterson 36:41

After the atomic bomb, I definitely remember that end of the Japanese part of the war, but then there were further tests after the war was over. There were tests conducted in the Pacific with atomic bombs.

Tommy Patterson 37:02

I think there were some tests conducted with hydrogen bombs. I'm not sure about that, but I think there were. I remember that. Then, I graduated from high school in 1948, so the war was over. I began to think about other things, I suppose, and I'm thinking about the war years.

Tommy Patterson 37:37

I think we were just happy when the war was over. The girls were happy. I remember that some of the girls were happy because then they could get more material and make these new length skirts. Skirts got longer after the war because we were allowed to have more material in our clothes, and that's really not too significant.

Craig Patterson 38:11

When you were a teenager, were there words or phrases that were popular that people wouldn't know about today?

Tommy Patterson 38:17

I'm sure there were, but I don't remember what they were.

Craig Patterson 38:21

What did you like to wear as a teenager?

Tommy Patterson 38:27

To school, I wore skirts and sweaters, saddle shoes, and bobby socks, mostly. That's as a high schooler. But another thing was that we all had gym, which you might call P .E. or something akin to that.

Tommy Patterson 38:47

And that was one of the requirements, along with English and math and all the other things. P .E. was another one of the requirements. And so we all did that. And the rest of it, what did we wear when we were not in school?

Tommy Patterson 39:04

I think we wore jeans and t -shirts and pretty casual things.

Craig Patterson 39:14

Were those all because that was what your mom wanted you to wear, or did she not approve of the things you wore?

Tommy Patterson 39:19

No, she approved—she—except if the sweaters were too tight, she didn't approve of that, so it didn't wear tight sweaters. But the thing about it is, nobody did. The girls pretty much, if they were flirting, they were kind of circumspect about it.

Tommy Patterson 39:47

And I'm sure that we were all flirting, because that's what we do—that's what people do is flirt. That was a big flirt.

Craig Patterson 39:56

When did you learn how to drive?

Tommy Patterson 39:58

Oh, when I was—I must have been fifteen because I was sixteen in the summertime in June, and I would have—we didn't have driver ed. You just had somebody from school, not even necessarily from school, but somebody to teach you how to drive.

Tommy Patterson 40:27

And then we did all have to take tests to get our licenses, who gave us a test? Must have been somebody from the state.

Craig Patterson 40:34

you how to drive

Tommy Patterson 40:36

Um, must have been my mother because my father wasn't there to teach me.

Craig Patterson 40:44

Wasn't anybody from school?

Tommy Patterson 40:46

I don't think so. I don't remember for sure, but I'm pretty sure it wasn't a class. My mother teach me how to drive, but I think I drive better than my mother did.

Craig Patterson 40:59

What was your first car and how did you get it?

Tommy Patterson 41:03

my own or in our family.

Craig Patterson 41:04

your own.

Tommy Patterson 41:06

It was a Chevy, whatever the dirt cheap model is, and it was probably a 1952, and I got it because I was going to get a job.

Craig Patterson 41:31

KATHRYN We'll be right back.

Tommy Patterson 41:33

So I really kind of had to have a car, and a friend of mine had gotten married and was getting a divorce and getting the car, and she wanted to sell it, so I bought it from her. Oh, that must have been a 50—because it was not new, it was used, and I graduated from college in 1952, and I went to work in 54.

Tommy Patterson 42:00

So, it might have been a 50—it was not new, it might have been a 52 or a 53 Chevy.

Craig Patterson 42:09

How long did you keep that car?

Tommy Patterson 42:13

several years and I had it then when dad and I got married and he had a Hudson which he absolutely loved this Hudson I thought it was huge and I didn't like it but he thought it was kind of a you know Zephyr he loved it and then we decided it needed some work and he didn't he didn't especially like my car because it was so ordinary very ordinary you know everybody has these simple Chevrolet's don't want that so we traded both of them in a newer Chevrolet no we just traded in one of them and and kept the Hudson for another year and then eventually traded that in for another Chevrolet and we had a lot of Chevrolet's until we got married which was in 1950

Craig Patterson 43:25

for what we'll get to that in a little bit okay going back to high school yeah what dreams and goals did you have for your life when you graduated high school

Tommy Patterson 43:33

One of my goals was I wanted to go to college and finish college before I got married. I thought lots of girls went to college to meet men and marry them, and I didn't want to do that. If I was going to bother to go to college, I wanted to get something in there, so I said I wanted to meet a lot of men, that would be fine, but I didn't, I wasn't interested in getting serious with any of them, and so I didn't, and I thought I was going to be this hotshot counselor.

Tommy Patterson 44:06

I majored in psychology, and I thought I'd be a counselor of some kind.

Craig Patterson 44:15

Mixing in the current with the early just for a second keeping in touch with the extended family has always been a priority for you Yes, did that attitude start when you were younger and do you know how it started?

Tommy Patterson 44:29

It started, yes, when I was younger. I can't even name it. And my mother never said anything like, we must do this or we mustn't, you know, do that. We just did it. And it started because in Crete, that's where grandma lived and that's where the foundation of the whole relationship was.

Tommy Patterson 44:53

And because she had so many brothers and sisters and they all had offspring, many of whom were close physically. They were in Gary, Indiana and Brunswick, Indiana and Chicago Heights, Illinois and all around so that it was not hard to keep in touch with them.

Tommy Patterson 45:19

And there was always a gathering on any kind of holiday. And then, and also for weddings and funerals and other swell affairs. And one of the famous phrases was at funerals, you'd get together and say, oh, and Francine, it's wonderful to see you.

Tommy Patterson 45:39

I'm sorry, it has to be for an occasion of this kind, meaning a funeral. And everybody always said that, but everybody enjoyed it. We all had a good time at all these gatherings because we'd see people we knew and people who liked us.

Tommy Patterson 45:54

And there was no, there was rarely, sometimes I'm sure there was, but there was rarely a feeling of no, we have to go to this because we know these people or they sold us our house and so we have to see them or something.

Tommy Patterson 46:10

It was always no, this is family, we want to see them. We want to go and see them. And it was always very positive.

Craig Patterson 46:19

Alright, there are a few things that we haven't covered before we go into the next section. The first one is a present that your mother gave you. Tell me about that, the things that she explained to you about it.

Tommy Patterson 46:29

I had asked for something that we used to call men. They were little, probably three -inch high, metal soldiers or figures of some kind, and we played with them, and we called all of them men. And I had wanted to get some soldiers, I think, and I got something that I didn't want.

Tommy Patterson 46:58

And I went in the bathroom and sat there and cried and felt so sorry for myself because I didn't get what I had asked for. And my mother had a lovely talk with me. She explained that she was sorry that they couldn't find the particular men that I had wanted, but that she hoped that I would understand that they had tried, and that she hoped that I would be content with what I had gotten.

Tommy Patterson 47:27

And it made me think about it a long time so that I remember that talk, and it makes me more grateful for things that I have as opposed to things that I think I want, which I don't always want, certainly don't always need, but I think that she explained it in a way that made me think about being grateful.

Craig Patterson 47:55

When you were six, your family got a refrigerator. Tell us about that.

Tommy Patterson 48:00

We had a literal ice box, and you put a sign in the window that said 25. You wanted 25 pounds of ice. And so the ice man came, stuck 25 pounds of ice in your ice box, and it literally kept the ice cold so that your stuff would not spoil.

Tommy Patterson 48:19

And they bought a refrigerator. It was a Frigidaire refrigerator, and it came as marvelous, huge box. Coke thought the box was far superior to the refrigerator, and he wanted to play in the box all the time.

Tommy Patterson 48:35

And I thought the refrigerator was pretty nice. And I still do think refrigerators are pretty nice.

Craig Patterson 48:43

And did that lead into somehow a lemon cake treat at the drugstore? Yes.

Tommy Patterson 48:48

If my father was gone, and she my mother thought it was time to do something fun with us she would Gather us together, and we would walk to the drugstore which was literally a corner drugstore, and it was about two blocks from our house and I'm sure it would be hard for anybody now To understand that buying something for 25 cents was a big treat But it was and it was a bottle of lemon coke and then we would take that home And she'd put it on ice and we'd all have it and it was just Really special for us, and I we all remember that or at least I certainly do it was it was Something very caring that my mother did for us

Craig Patterson 49:37

Your grandfather, Grandpa Rowey, when he passed away, tell us about that.

Tommy Patterson 49:41

Oh, my father and brothers and I were all in Western Springs. My mother was in Crete with her father and mother when my grandfather was sick. And when he died, she called on the telephone. And I'm not sure why I answered the phone rather than my father, but I did.

Tommy Patterson 50:08

And she told me that he had died and I got the news. But the thing I remember specifically about it is that for some reason, I

thought it should be incredibly private. And so I went in the bathroom and talked to her about my grandfather.

Tommy Patterson 50:24

I told the others that Grandpa had died, but it wasn't something that I wanted to go out in the dining room, which was our public area or more public. I was in the bathroom being very private about it, and I'm not sure why.

Craig Patterson 50:45

What did your father teach you about trains in 1932?

Tommy Patterson 50:48

Oh, the Burlington Railroad started the Denver Zephyr, the silver trains that were so special. And so my father took us to the railroad station in Western Springs one day and said he wanted to show us the trains.

Tommy Patterson 51:08

And so we stood there and waited for the trains. And he said, now, one thing I want to tell you about trains is you think if you stand here, you're okay because you're not on the track. But the trains make so much suction going by that they could sweep you up in them and run over you.

Tommy Patterson 51:29

And I don't want you to do that. So stay farther away from the trains than you think you need to. And so that has given me the feeling that you have to be pretty careful around trains. And I always am.

Tommy Patterson 51:42

And when I have nightmares, I dream about trains, trains chasing me everywhere. We also, he also told us that some people put a penny on the track to see if the train would crush it. He said, that's illegal to do, so don't do that.

Tommy Patterson 52:00

It's dangerous to do for you. And it could be dangerous for the train. We were never quite sure whether it would ever derail a train or not, but anyway, so we didn't ever do that because he gave us the word that that was not something we were supposed to do.

Tommy Patterson 52:14

Well, you didn't do.

Craig Patterson 52:16

that when you were kids, but we did that with you in Crete when we were kids. You did? Yes.

Tommy Patterson 52:23

Didn't I tell you not to do that?

Craig Patterson 52:25

Um, I don't recall.

Tommy Patterson 52:27

I think I probably did, but, see, my father had, at one time during the Depression, had worked for the Atchison, Topeka, and Satterfey as a rail inspector. And so he had one of those little hand cars that go like this up and down, and he'd go up and down inspecting the train.

Tommy Patterson 52:49

I don't know how long that lasted, but that was during the Depression. My father always had work during the Depression. He didn't make much money, but he did always manage to get a job, which is pretty unusual because there were so many people out of work.

Tommy Patterson 53:07

But he did manage, and he must not have been connected with the oil business at that time because Uncle Mellie always had it. He was with Standard Oil forever. And so my father didn't stay with that.

Craig Patterson 53:27

Your family took a trip to Washington, isn't that right?

Tommy Patterson 53:30

Well, yeah, we went, and when we went to go see, to join him at Camp Ford, at Fort Lewis, Washington, yeah, we took that train trip, but there was another one later, Puz and Coke both went to school at the, at Washington State College in Spokane, Washington.

Tommy Patterson 53:58

And one summer, I think maybe I had finished my junior year, I'm not sure that I've got this timing right, but anyway, I had, I might have still been in high school, and my mother decided that we would go and pick them up from school when the term was over at Washington State, and bring them back to Crete, because they were going to come back to Crete, and they didn't have a car there.

Tommy Patterson 54:33

So we were going to drive out there, and I was going to go with her so she'd have company. I must not have been driving. She asked whatever that is, what's the association, the AAA or something, for a map to get to Spokane, so we got a road map, we got all the instructions, and we started out.

Tommy Patterson 54:55

We got along pretty well until we got to Washington State where they had had floods all over everywhere, and we went up these roads that were flooded, had been flooded out. It was terrible. We both were scared to death half the time.

Tommy Patterson 55:11

She was driving, and I'm almost surprised that we made it, because we did not have an accident. It was one of the scariest trips I've ever been on. I don't want to do that again, ever. It was awful. All the roads were washed out.

Tommy Patterson 55:26

We didn't know where we were supposed to go. There wasn't any really good direction thing to tell you where you were supposed to go. But anyway, we did make it. We got there and picked them up, and then we all drove back to Crete.

Tommy Patterson 55:44

What year did you go to the World's Fair? Oh, see, I was very little. I was born in 1931, right? I think the World's Fair was in 1933 and 1934. So when I was three, I could remember when I was three, in 1934, that was possible that I remember this.

Tommy Patterson 56:12

We went to the World's Fair in Chicago, and we rode on something called the SkyRide, which of course now they've got stuff that's scarier and crazier and everything than that was. But this was a big thing, like a train car that was up in the air, and it was—it must have moved somehow.

Tommy Patterson 56:38

I can't remember exactly how. But I do remember doing that and being kind of scared about going up into this tall thing and being off the ground and not really knowing what was going to happen. And I was pretty little.

Tommy Patterson 56:55

I think I was three, and so I think that probably is my earliest memory.

Craig Patterson 57:03

Well, skipping ahead from three to college, what college did you attend and do you think that that was a wise choice to attend the college that you did?

Tommy Patterson 57:14

I went to Rockford College and I don't know whether it was, I will never know whether it was wise choice or not. I remember it fondly. Now they have turned into a university. They are very big on changing to meet the current demands.

Tommy Patterson 57:30

And so it's entirely different from when I was there. I loved it while I was there and I feel that it provided me with the best friendships I have had with women. And we didn't meet men because it was a woman's college.

Tommy Patterson 57:50

And it gave us the feeling that we could do whatever we wanted to do because there we were. We were getting an

education. We were going to be strong people and we were. And it was a very fine bunch of women with whom I became acquainted.

Tommy Patterson 58:08

And they have always, they had been my best friends for 50 years, 60 years, 60 years. And I don't know whether that was a good choice or not. I think I was slightly hampered by the fact that my aunt went there, my mother went there, my cousin went there.

Tommy Patterson 58:32

My cousin was a really big cheese there. And she was a couple of years ahead of me. So by the time I got there, oh yes, everybody knew her and they went and after she graduated and left, I got along more on me than on her.

Tommy Patterson 58:48

And that was a good thing. And I don't know whether I would have done better career wise by going somewhere else. But I'm not sorry that I went there. I'm very happy. But I'm very grateful to my father for making it possible for me to go there.

Craig Patterson 59:07

Did you have a job in college?

Tommy Patterson 59:09

Yeah, I worked in the dining room, waiting tables.

Craig Patterson 59:15

What did you like or not like about it?

Tommy Patterson 59:17

waiting tables. The thing that I liked was seeing the other kids because they don't do this anymore. We had a dining room and the women all ate in the dining room, ate the dinner at the same time in the dining room.

Tommy Patterson 59:36

We sang our grace and it was a time for a little bit of reflection and a lot of communication because there were tables of probably eight so that we would talk to one another. It was a good community time.

Tommy Patterson 01:00:00

The thing I didn't like about it was the dishes that we had to carry out, we had little carts that we pushed things around on but we had to get from the shelves to the cart. The dishes were this big, they were eight in a stack, they weighed a ton and they were very hard to move back and forth.

Tommy Patterson 01:00:21

I hated that part of it. And then the doors, the doors weren't terribly heavy except in order to get them open you had to kick them and if you kicked them the wrong amount then they would bounce back and hit you in the face or in the rear or something.

Tommy Patterson 01:00:39

I didn't think it was a terribly smooth arrangement for getting in and out of the kitchen but mostly it was okay and the people who worked in the waiting wait staff, some of them I was more friendly to because we were all working.

Tommy Patterson 01:00:58

There were two people who didn't work at all because they didn't have to work. And I don't know that I had to work but I felt that I should and so I used my waitressing money for my spending money.

Craig Patterson 01:01:13

After college, how did you and dad meet?

Tommy Patterson 01:01:16

I was in graduate school at Kansas State College, and this is one of the more embarrassing parts of my career. There were a couple of other women in graduate school, and one of them asked us to a party at her house.

Tommy Patterson 01:01:36

She was married, and her husband was at this party, of course, because she was giving it. And apparently, one can only hope that he took a fancy to me. I didn't pursue him, but he did begin to pursue me.

Tommy Patterson 01:01:51

So that's how we met. What was the next part of the question?

Craig Patterson 01:01:56

Well, that was the only question up until that point.

Tommy Patterson 01:01:58

Okay, well that's how we met.

Craig Patterson 01:02:01

How did your relationship blossom after meeting?

Tommy Patterson 01:02:04

Well, he told me that he was very interested in me, and I thought that was very nice, and I felt that he was definitely 73 layers better than anybody I had ever met before, at least that much. And if we were going to be interested in each other, I didn't think that was a good plan, because he was married, and his wife was in my department, and she and I were very good friends.

Tommy Patterson 01:02:39

And so I quit my job there and went back to Crete and told him that I thought that I should just get out of there until he and his wife had figured out what they wanted to do. And so I did, I went back to Crete, and then he and his wife eventually got a divorce, and then he came to Illinois and continued pursuing me.

Tommy Patterson 01:03:04

Well he had continued pursuing me a little before he actually came back to Illinois.

Craig Patterson 01:03:10

What made you and dad decide to come to the middle of Colorado?

Tommy Patterson 01:03:13

Oh, dad was born in Colorado. He thought, and when we got married, he got a job in Illinois because that's where I was and we got married and so we were in Illinois. And he did get, he did get a job at a school in Evanston, Illinois, which is one of the niftier spots in Illinois on the north shore of Chicago.

Tommy Patterson 01:03:39

So as jobs go, because he was teaching English, as jobs go, that was really pretty good. So that was not why he left there. He said he was tired of being in Illinois. He didn't want any children that we might have to grow up in Chicago.

Tommy Patterson 01:03:58

And then we had both Mark and Craig and he said he wanted to come back to Colorado because this is what he considered his home base. And that's, any place somebody is from tends to be their home base.

Tommy Patterson 01:04:20

Now one would think, well, then why didn't I go back to Illinois? Because Colorado's better, it's nicer. But anyway, so we came to Colorado and as soon as I got here, I could see why he wanted to be here.

Tommy Patterson 01:04:33

The atmosphere was very welcoming. And at the time that we came, which was 51 years ago, it was open and very relaxed and very friendly. Now it is fast -paced. People are pursuing stuff that they didn't use to pursue so much.

Tommy Patterson 01:05:02

It's just because everything has changed in the last 50 years. So, but I don't feel like moving because I get to look out my window at my spiritual support. The mountains are my spiritual support.